WHITE PAPER:

Strategic IT Outsourcing
A Common-Sense Business Approach to Co-Managing Information Technology

Technology is both a liberator and a weight on the business community today. Few organizations can function, let alone excel, without a well-designed and properly managed IT ecosystem that supports employees, customers and other key players inside and outside the organization. Information technology helps businesses bring order to the everyday chaos, meet a variety of different strategic and tactical objectives, and overcome a multitude of challenges.

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Innovation is also an enabler. A major concern for every organization is not just keeping ahead of the competition but finding ways to leverage the latest technologies, adopt or exceed industry standards, and defend against rapidly evolving cyberthreats. Moving forward with innovation initiatives and updating key systems while maintaining day-to-day IT activities is a basic expectation for all organizations.

But meeting this expectation is a challenge for many organizations today. Few have the bandwidth, skillsets and knowledge to properly address the ever-growing list of infrastructure, compliance and data-protection requirements. Even companies with large and highly capable IT teams struggle to stay abreast of the tech environment, especially with the ongoing talent shortage.

Juggling the multifaceted responsibilities of cybersecurity, rapid innovation, and new and expanding regulations are pushing IT teams beyond their limits. In many cases, companies must prioritize and address the most urgent issues and delay other important but less business-critical IT activities—a list that can quickly spiral out of control.

That's why an increasing number of organizations with in-house IT teams rely on outsourced professionals for some level of support. Incorporating managed services providers (MSPs) into the IT group's master plan allows corporate teams to focus on their strong points and utilize others to augment bandwidth or specific expertise gaps.

The Rise of Co-Managed IT

Co-managed IT is a more formal alignment of those internal and external resources. While having outsourced partners for IT support and services is not new, demand for these arrangements has grown rapidly in recent years as businesses have come to understand the advantages of co-managed IT.

With more employees working remotely, the difficulty of managing and protecting those dispersed network resources is overburdening many internal IT departments. Co-managed IT relationships allow companies to cost-effectively expand services and balance employee workloads. For businesses both large and small, these technology support partners can collaborate with internal IT teams to boost technology and support capabilities and alleviate stress and burnout.

Co-managed IT also helps companies deal with hiring and budgeting challenges. This responsibility-sharing approach provides organizations with the best of both worlds: onsite staff to support the company's immediate needs and priorities and a talented

A WORSENING SKILLS AND LABOR MARKET

Industry experts project the challenges of locating and hiring quality talent in the information technology space will worsen before getting better over the next 10–20 years.

CompTIA's annual "State of the Tech Workforce" report underscored the extent of demand for IT talent as well as the persistent shortages. It found that the tech workforce is projected to grow twice as fast as the overall U.S. workforce, and demand for tech talent across the full spectrum of tech jobs is expected to continue unabated.

Pressure to increase IT salaries is also being seen across-the-board. The CompTIA report found that the median technology occupation wage is 103% higher than the median national wage in the U.S. This translates into organizations having to pay a lot more for IT talent, if they can even find professionals to hire.

The difficulty in finding IT talent—in tandem with growing technology complexity and increasing cyberthreats—has led many organizations to initiate and deepen engagements with co-managed IT partners.

outsourced team to fill skill gaps or deliver off-hour support. Those efficiencies can boost response times, planning and implementation capabilities, and data and network protection—without breaking the budget.

Create More Predictable IT Budgets

The ebb and flow of labor and technology costs can significantly disrupt any company's financial situation and negatively affect its strategic plans. As IT salaries and demand escalate, organizations must evaluate their priorities, core strengths and gaps, and develop a structure that is both cost-effective and scalable. Partnering with a qualified MSP makes that process a lot easier.

Co-managed IT is a predictable, dependable option for scaling the business during times of prosperity and controlling expenses when there is corporate or market uncertainty.

Though variable engagement options are possible, most co-managed contracts provide a standard list of services at a fixed monthly cost. This approach creates a solid baseline for IT departments to build on, hiring and training to fill essential positions as needed, and making only necessary investments.

Most contracts include standard and optional services with set project rates and fees. When a staff member leaves or takes personal time off, an MSP can typically provide additional resources to ease the burden. While there may be an additional charge for that option, in a proper co-managed IT contract, those services are typically quite cost-effective with rates and fees clearly listed.

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The Outsourced Multiplier

Co-managed IT services are based on shared responsibilities. To create successful engagements, the mutual parties must develop clearly defined roles, processes, policies and timelines. These steps define the obligations and set a proper cadence for all activities, as well as penalties for non-compliance, giving the organization a highly effective path for innovating, managing and protecting critical infrastructure and business systems.

While the depth and breadth of co-managed engagements may vary, the basic premise involves a company outsourcing part of its IT services to an MSP or other technology specialist. These providers will typically be responsible for ensuring the performance and security for their assigned pieces of the overall IT operations.

Advantages for the organization are plentiful:
- Co-managed IT partners give organizations greater access to wider, more advanced skillsets, from infrastructure design and management to disaster and remediation planning, as well as extensive project expertise. Many MSPs also have team members who have critical vendor and industry certifications. Relatively few businesses outside the Fortune 500 (and maybe some

inside that community) can afford to hire, train and retain a similar level of talent.

- IT expertise and bandwidth are critical in today's WFH and hybrid work situations. With more employees working remotely, often from high-risk environments, in-house IT teams can get overwhelmed with support requests. From ensuring proper network connectivity and implementing VPNs (virtual private networks) to monitoring cybersecurity training and installing the latest updates and patches, each task becomes more difficult outside the corporate firewall.

- Co-managed IT partners give organizations more "feet on the street" to support the needs of a remote or hybrid workforce, as well as for satellite offices and as backup staff to the in-house team. This additional coverage also comes in handy when employees are on vacation, sick leave or quit abruptly. Depending on the level of engagement, MSPs typically have the resources to fill in as needed. For instance, when businesses need support for cloud migrations or desktop-as-a-service (DaaS), IT providers can step in and deliver the necessary technical knowhow in concert with the needs of corporate leaders and end users.

- Many organizations also rely on MSPs for strategic guidance and planning. For example, some IT services firms provide system design and development support and offer product/service procurement, implementation and a 24/7/365 helpdesk. The latter offering alleviates off-hour staffing headaches, premium shift rates and overtime costs for businesses that have a primarily 9–5 operation.

Enhance Efficiency

In co-managed IT scenarios, the corporate staff often manages the company's internal IT environments. From PCs and servers to wired/wireless networks and system updates, the in-house team addresses the day-to-day technology operations and serves as the main point of contact for management, employees and contractors.

A major benefit of co-managed IT is the ability for organizations to focus their limited resources on managing core responsibilities. Through periodic evaluations, the mutual parties can assess current and future technology needs and resource capabilities, and adjustment engagement levels as needed.

An effective co-managed IT commitment optimizes staff utilization and helps reduce recruiting and payroll costs. The IT department can maximize its internal resources and augment those capabilities with outsourced technology partners. For example, with the quickly expanding skillset and salary requirements for cybersecurity and cloud professionals, organizations are increasingly handing off those responsibilities to outside experts, who become trusted business partners not simply one-off providers.

A Proactive, Not Reactive Approach

MSPs take a proactive management approach to help companies avoid IT problems from happening as opposed to responding after problems arise. In a co-managed environment, MSPs can extend their core tools to the in-house IT team, giving them access to alerts and system information to speed responses and avoid costly downtime. For example, MSPs leverage remote monitoring and management (RMM) platforms to automate complex and time-consuming tasks and proactively monitor networks and endpoints (i.e., servers, PCs, laptops, tablets).

Similarly, an MSP's professional services automation (PSA) tool lets combined teams share and co-manage service tickets, collaborate on various activities, and track projects and key developments. This "single pane of glass" application unifies people, processes and information across the IT environment, giving everyone greater insight into existing and potential problems and ongoing or upcoming tasks.

Drive Innovation

Innovation has become a critical differentiator in the business community, but organizations often lack the specialized resources needed for strategic implementation projects.

Bringing in a co-managed IT provider to design, implement and support the latest technologies is a cost-effective option. These focused engagements allow MSPs to manage innovation-related projects while freeing in-house IT staff to focus on their core responsibilities.

In some cases, organizations might take the opposite approach, using in-house resources to implement new technology while co-managed partners handle the day-to-day operations. The flexibility inherent in these relationships allows IT departments to find the right mix of services to support their unique needs, goals and culture.

Co-managed IT is not a one-size-fits-all opportunity, but a roadmap that lets business choose the best route (or routes) to get to their planned destination. Most MSPs offer a mix of services that allow for flexible engagement options.

Co-managed IT partners deliver complementary support services, such as:

- Infrastructure-as-a-service
- vCIO services
- Remote monitoring and management
- Anti-virus and malware
- Patch management
- Business continuity and BUDR
- Help desk
- Co-managed ticketing system
- Branded employee client portal
- Phishing awareness training and testing
- O365 management
- Cloud migration
- Desktop-as-a-Service

Project Outsourcing

- IT relocation services
- Procurement services
- Desktop and server virtualization
- Network design
- Network assessment
- Apple business consulting

The TeamLogic IT Plan

The concern for many CIOs, IT departments and corporate leaders is selecting an outsourced partner they can trust. A strong co-managed IT relationship requires confidence in the MSP's technical abilities and an understanding of shared business and project goals.

Can the outsourced partner collaborate effectively with the internal IT department and successfully complete its assigned tasks? TeamLogic IT understands those concerns and has extensive experience in developing and maintaining long-term co-managed IT relationships.

As a go-to tech team that empowers and expands the capabilities of internal IT departments, we provide an extensive portfolio of services and resources. Key areas of assistance include:

- **Managed IT Services**
    - > Remote monitoring and management of desktops and server
    - > Application and operating system patch management
    - > Cybersecurity essentials, endpoint protection, employee security awareness training
    - > Backup and disaster recovery for critical business systems and data

- **Helpdesk Services**
    - > 24/7/365 coverage
    - > Support by skilled technicians
    - > Toll-free phone lines
    - > Escalation procedures
    - > Co-managed ticket workflow
    - > Call tracking through to resolution
    - > Workstation hardware support
    - > Operating system support
    - > Core application software support
    - > Email client support
    - > Microsoft 365 support
    - > Call activity reporting

- **Virtual CIO Services (vCIO)**
    - > Technology roadmap development and review
    - > Ongoing IT planning and budgets
    - > Technology and business risk assessment
    - > Technology planning and deployment
    - > Vendor management
    - > IT expertise and leadership

For help with your technology, contact your local TeamLogic IT office.

TeamLogic IT is a national provider of advanced IT management services for businesses. With locations across the U.S. and Canada, TeamLogic IT provides managed services, computer consulting and support services focused on helping companies minimize downtime and improve productivity. TeamLogic IT helps businesses compete better through the effective use of information technology.